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ABSTRACT

One of the most important things parents can do is to help their children to develop a love of reading and a love of the library. Parents can: take their children to the library; give books rather than other types of gifts; work with librarians to acquaint children with the library. Teachers can help children by assigning simple projects which require library usage. Librarians are generally helpful individuals who will assist children with the card catalog and the Dewey Decimal System. Library cards and bookmarks are important cards to have. Good library habits include: (1) a visit to the library at least once a month; (2) taking children to browse through newly acquired books and magazines; (3) use of the library to procure information for school and other events; (4) "adopting" an author; and (5) helping children build their own library if possible. (RS)

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HELPING YOUR CHILD USE THE LIBRARY

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Parents can help their children enjoy reading. One of the most important gifts parents can give children is the gift of being able to read. One tool toward this gift is the ability to use the library. The school library, the local library and the home library are all tools toward reading well. One of the most important things a parent can do is to help their child to develop a love of reading and a love of the library.

Parents can take their children to the library. There are " story hours " for younger children wherein librarians read to pre-school children. Many " Head Start " facilities take children to the library as part of their program. many kindergarten teachers have " story hour " and even first and second grade teachers encourage sustained silent reading. The library is obviously a storehouse of knowledge and information as well as a place to " get away from it all " Even children need a quiet, well lit environment where they can be alone with their thougts. Too many children go off to malls and movie houses and video arcades rather than spending quality time in the library with their parents.

Parents can give books rather than other types of gifts. Too many parents give " SUPER MARIO BROTHERS " and other types of nonsensical toys which do little to ameliorate the cognitive growth of their children. Parents can help their children develop a library collection of their favorite authors- Judy

Bloome or whoever- and develop a care and concern for the development of their reading skills.

Parents can work with librarians to acquaint children with the library. Children need to know about the card catalog, the section where the encyclopedia is located as well as the dictionary. In addition, children can learn about the world through maps, and books about specific countries. We in the United States often forget about the splendor of Rome, the beauty of Paris, the glory of London, the Swiss Alps, the city of Copenhagen in Denmark with the Tivoli Gardens and the wonderful city of Turku in Finland. Most people have difficulty finding Finland, let alone Turku, but the countries of Norway and Sweden have much beauty to offer in terms of the fjords and their rivers. There are other countries such as Austria and Australia. Parents and teachers should encourage students to find Bosnia on the map as well as Sarajevo (the city where World War One began !)

Many libraries have movies , audio visual materials, records and other media centers. These areas afford a quiet place to relax and to do homework or to simply read. Libraries are often decorated with the motif of the season and are very nice places to spend an evening during vacations or weekends.

Teachers can help children by assigning simple projects which require library usage. Many college students have difficulties in their freshman year (or is it freshperson year?) because

they lack the needed library skills to do freshmen term papers. Using the public library will give students a foundation for later library skills. A solid foundation is critically needed for students to be able to access information in our " information society " .

Librarians are generally helpful individuals who will assist children with the card catalog and the Dewey Decimal System.

You can learn much from the Dewey Decimal system (I was once told that John Dewey invented it !) about finding information. Many years ago, on a " Happy Days " episode, the FONZ was determined to go an get a library card. Needless to say, the next day, the libraries of the United States were flooded and inundated with school children who also felt that they must procure a library card. If your child does not have a library card, they are missing out on a visa like passport to school success and a lifetime of happiness. Many summer days should be spent in the library rather than at the local pool. Or rainy days can be spent in productive time instead of home in front of the television.

While the library card IS important, there is another card that is equally important- the card that can be used as a book mark. Having a book mark prevents " dog eared " books and allows children to return to a story later- when they may have time to enjoy it ! A book mark can be an index card, a piece of paper, or one of the fancy, frilly things that are sold in book stores.

A book mark gives a child a feeling of ownership to a book and allows them to have a feeling of control- that they can return to a chapter later in the day if their eyes do tire ,or if they fatigue.

In a public service announcement, famed author Steven King once commented " You know what really scares me ? People that don't use the public library ! " In this day and age, children spend much too much time in the mall and not enough times in the " stacks " of libraries. Today's libraries have microfeche, microfilm and xerox machines.

LIBRARY HABITS :

1) Visit the library at least once a month- (with your children).

2) Acquaint yourself with the special events going on at the library- such as Christmas readings of Charles Dickins " A Christmas Carol " and other events.

3) Browse through the newly acquired books and the recent magazines and newspapers. Take your child with you.

4) Use the library to procure information for school and other events.

5) Adopt an author- For younger children it might be Dr. Seuss. For school aged children it could be John Birningham and for adolescents, Judy Bloom. Adopting an author might involve writing to the author for an autographed picture or simply to correspond with him or her. It is very interesting to see which authors respond to children's letters ! (Yes, Stephen King does respond to his fan mail !)

6) Help your child " get to know " the various types of boooks- Start with picture books, move on to age appropriate books, and acquaint your child with sports books, science fiction, biography and auto biography books. There are also reference books, pleasure books and informational books.

7) Introduce your child to the librarian. He or she can help the child to find an age appropriate books relevant to their interests. Librarians have a keen sense for the types of books that children like at certain ages. If only we could package and market their subtle sense of what children and adolescents like to read.

8) Gradually introduce your child to other libraries at the local colleges or universities. Also, there are a number of stores (Hastings, Waldenbooks) that have special programs for children.

9) Help your child build their own library if possible.

The library can be an enjoyable place for children to learn the pleasures of reading, and build a foundation for future learning via library skills.